

June 19, 2009

California High-Speed Train Update

New Federal Guidelines Appear to Give California a Boost for High-Speed Rail Funding

The Federal Railroad Administration's high-speed and passenger rail funding guidelines released June 17, may appear to put California's proposed 800-mile statewide system at the forefront for a significant share of \$8 billion in stimulus funding for high-speed trains, according to Quentin Kopp, chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

"California is the only state in the country that already has in place \$9 billion in voter-approved financing, environmental clearances and an adopted route for a true high-speed train," said Kopp. "Those are the kinds of benchmarks the FRA said will guide its allocation of the federal stimulus funds.

"We'll be taking a closer look at the details of the guidelines, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed that such guidelines will enable the California High-Speed Rail Authority to secure a significant federal stimulus grant consistent with our project's progress," said Kopp. "This will put people to work and provide a much needed financial infusion into our economy, as well as launch a new transportation alternative for California which will enhance California's capability of meeting the state's growing demand for mobility."

California's voter-approved \$9 billion bond "is very important," said Karen Rae, deputy administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration. "California by having the bond has a step up," she told the Associated Press.

The announcement by the FRA is part of the agency's implementation

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of President Obama's vision for an American network of high-speed trains. The FRA has set a July 10 deadline for pre-applications and an August 24 deadline for most final application papers. The FRA said it intends to release the first round of grants by mid-September.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, told the *New York Times* recently that Californians "are obviously way, way ahead of everyone else" in developing a true high-speed train system capable of whisking passengers up to 220 miles an hour. And the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Vice President Joe Biden earlier this month as saying California is "looking good for federal money" from the stimulus package.

The state's application for high-speed train funding will include projects for virtually every section within the entire 800-mile system, said Kopp.

Getting Up To Speed

New York Times Magazine

By Jon Gertner

Published: June 10, 2009

This is a story not about [Amtrak](#) but about trains, and the problem with any story about trains in America is that you often find yourself thinking about Amtrak, and you often find yourself thinking about how nice it would be if you weren't thinking about Amtrak. This is especially true when you're actually riding on Amtrak, which happened to be the case one morning in March when I boarded the Pacific Surfliner in downtown Los Angeles for a 500-mile trip, mostly up the coast, to Sacramento...

I had two reasons for going to Sacramento. The first was to get a clearer sense of why a lot of people in California think it's necessary to build an entirely new passenger-rail system. The second was to see how they might do so. Since it was established in 1996, the California High Speed Rail Authority, an assemblage of train advocates and engineers, had been working out of offices in the capital to explore how the state could build a rail line from Los Angeles to San Francisco for \$33 billion, with two additional branches — costing billions more — eventually extending to Sacramento in the north and San Diego in the south. It would not be an Amtrak operation but one owned by the state

of California. Last November, state voters approved a \$10 billion bond measure to get the project moving. Earlier this year, [President Obama](#), who on a trip to France in April conceded he was “jealous” of European high-speed trains, submitted budget and stimulus plans that together allocated approximately \$13 billion for [high-speed rail](#) over the next five years. It seems almost certain that at least some of that money, and perhaps a significant percentage of it, will go this fall to California’s project, which is the most developed of any U.S. high-speed-rail plan. [Ray LaHood](#), the U.S. secretary of transportation, told me recently that Californians “are obviously way, way ahead of everyone else.” In late May, LaHood rode on the French and Spanish high-speed-rail lines and met with European train companies that hope to sell their products to the United States.

If it can get started, the California high-speed train would almost certainly be the most expensive single infrastructure project in United States history. And if it is completed, the train will go from L.A. to San Francisco in just under 2 hours 40 minutes and from L.A. to Sacramento in about 2 hours 17 minutes. Judging by the experiences of Japan and France, both of which have mature high-speed rail systems, it would end the expansion of regional airline traffic as in-state travelers increasingly ride the fast trains. And it would surely slow the growth of highway traffic. Other potential benefits are also intriguing: a probable economic windfall for several cities along the route, with rejuvenated neighborhoods and center cities; several hundred thousand jobs in construction, manufacturing, operations and maintenance; and the environmental benefits that come from vehicles far more efficient and far less polluting than jets, buses and cars. Apart from the breathtaking price tag, commentators often focus on the projected velocity of the California trains, on how they will reach an astounding 220 m.p.h. in some stretches near Bakersfield and will cover the distance from L.A. to the Bay Area at an average speed approaching 175 m.p.h. As someone who never understood the zealotry of hard-core train enthusiasts, I found the project’s other selling points more compelling: center city to center city in a few hours without airport lines or onerous security checks. No bus connections. No traffic. And no counting on luck. Which is to say that high-speed trains are obviously about going fast, but when you think about it, they’re just as much about time as speed.

To read the entire article please visit the New York Times online or click [here](#).

Board Meeting

July 2, 2009 at 10:00 am

Sacramento City Council Chambers
915 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Find Out More

If your affiliated organization would like to learn more about the proposed high-speed train or have a transit-oriented event that could include high-speed train representation, please contact us to schedule; we will make every opportunity to honor your request.

Contact the California High Speed Rail Authority by visiting our website at: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov> or call us at (916) 324-1541.

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